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AUTHOR Monahan, Thomas C.
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ABSTRACT

A survey of 108 elementary and secondary teachers in southern New Jersey was conducted to determine the extent to which the teachers viewed grant development as a factor in their professional growth and development. The survey revealed that fewer than 1 percent of the respondents reported that they "often" engaged in grant-related activities; none reported "very often." Ten percent reported that they "sometimes" engaged in such activity, 23 percent reported "rarely," and the remaining 47 percent reported that they "never" engaged in grant-seeking or grant-writing activities. Most respondents viewed their primary roles as teachers and not as researchers or scholars. Very few school districts were reported to have frequently provided their teachers with assistance in locating sources of external funding for their ideas. School districts did not provide reduced teaching loads, extra secretarial help, or extra funds for travel or equipment to encourage teachers to engage in grant-related activities. Teachers did not perceive that their grants activity was important in the tenure decision process. Teachers reported that a general lack of knowledge of grantsmanship, their teaching responsibilities, and a lack of administrative encouragement were the primary obstacles to their involvement in grant development. Recommendations for helping teachers to become more involved are discussed. (Contains 11 references.) (JDD)

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GRANT-SEEKING AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF K-12 TEACHERS

(Incentives and Obstacles)

Thomas C. Monahan

Acting Dean of Graduate Studies and Sponsored Research
Glassboro State College
Glassboro, New Jersey

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Introduction

Grantsmanship has long been viewed as an essential element of professional academic development. At large, research-oriented universities, many professors, especially in the sciences, virtually depend on government and foundation grants to support their continuing research and, in some cases, their very jobs. At smaller, undergraduate teaching institutions, grants help to launch new initiatives that could otherwise not be accomplished with institutional funds. Such sponsored projects help to achieve the teaching-research-service missions of most of the nation's institutions of higher education. Virtually all professors recognize the value of grants and see the results of such scholarship--the published paper--as a means for professional growth and development, promotion, and tenure.

While developing new knowledge and helping to unravel the mysteries of science or literature are common within the higher education professoriate, such may not be the case within the elementary and secondary educational domain. K-12 teachers tend to view their primary responsibility as teaching. Even though national organizations like the American Educational Research Association draw thousands of teacher/researchers to their annual conferences to present papers and symposia on topics critical to the K-12 audience, rank and file teachers are supported primarily by the fact that they teach. Grantsmanship at the K-12 level is, for many, a way to fund new or creative projects, to purchase badly-needed equipment, or to fund travel to workshops and conferences -- not to contribute to teachers' professional development.

Much of the published literature on grant development for elementary and secondary teachers focuses on the mechanics of grantsmanship. Seldin and Maloy (1981), Amann (1989), Bauer and Otto (1989), and Plesich et al (1989) provide extensive advice to classroom teachers on "how to" subjects like finding grant opportunities, preparing adequate budgets and writing winning proposals. There does not exist, however, the same depth and breadth of literature on other aspects of grant related activities at the elementary and secondary levels. For example, very little research exists on the tangible and intangible factors that motivate teachers to engage in grant seeking or grant writing activities. Similarly, only a

limited amount of research has been conducted on some of the barriers that prevent teachers from pursuing grant opportunities. Wright et al (1981) have written on the perceptions of school district staff in competing for federal education grants. They found that confusing or cumbersome application procedures, lack of staff to prepare applications,and the perceived low chances of receiving grant awards were the chief factors in discouraging them from competing for federal dollars.

Research on these issues abounds in the literature of higher education research. Young (1978), Hellweg and Churchman (1979), Fielder (1979), Plucker (1988), Bergen et al (1989) and Gallaher and Daniel (1989) are just a few who have suggested that lack of time, heavy teaching responsibilities, administrative ambivalence or indifference, the lack of a grants professional, lack of tangible reward systems, cumbersome bureaucratic rules and regulations, and lack of colleagues with whom to work are among the many barriers that inhibit professors from engaging in grant related activities.

The purpose of this research was to survey a sample of K-12 teachers in order to determine the extent to which they view grant development as a factor in their professional growth and development and to identify some of the factors that appear to inhibit teachers from engaging in grant related activities. Drawing upon earlier findings primarily for higher education, this research further sought to identify the perceived importance of selected factors as incentives for K-12 teachers to engage in grant related activities and the extent to which these incentives were provided by their school districts.

Study Methodology and Sample Demographics

A survey instrument was developed based upon the obstacles and incentives that were suggested in the scholarly literature. The instrument was field tested among a small sample of teachers who were enrolled in a graduate course in research methodology at a northeastern state college. Subsequent to the field test, the instrument was revised based on their criticisms and input.

A random sample of 140 elementary and secondary teachers in the southern New Jersey region was selected, and survey instruments were received from 108 teachers. Seventy-two percent of the subjects

were female, and 28 percent were male. Fewer than 2 percent of the respondents had been employed as full-time teachers for less than one year. Twenty percent had been full-time teachers for 2-5 years, 26 percent for 6-10 years, 28 percent for 11-15 years, and the remaining 24 percent were employed as full-time teachers for more than 15 years.

Nearly 38 percent of the subjects identified their primary teaching assignments at the elementary level; 22 percent indicated their primary teaching assignments were at the middle school level, and the remaining 40 percent indicated their primary teaching assignments were at the secondary level. Seventy-nine percent of the subjects identified themselves as tenured; the remaining 21 percent reported they were non-tenured.

Ninety-six percent of the subjects were employed in public schools; only 4 percent reported that they were non-public school teachers. Twenty-four percent of the subjects reported that they were employed in predominantly urban districts; 48 percent reported that they worked in suburban districts, and 28 percent reported that they worked in rural districts.

Only fifteen percent of the subjects indicated that their schools or school districts had an operating grants or sponsored research office; 53 percent reported that no such office existed, and 32 percent reported that they didn't know if such an office existed.

Findings

Fewer than 1 percent of the respondents reported that they "often" engaged in grant related activities; none reported "very often". Only 10 percent reported that they "sometimes" engaged in such activity, 23 percent reported "rarely", and the remaining 47 percent reported that they "never" engaged in grant seeking or grant writing activities.

The extent to which respondents received assistance from their schools or school districts in identifying or locating sources of outside funding for their ideas was indicative of those who did not

engage in much grant related activity. Fewer than 1 percent of the respondents reported that their schools or school districts "very often" helped them to identify or locate extramural funding for their ideas. Slightly less than 18 percent reported that such assistance was provided "often"; 23 percent reported that such assistance was provided "sometimes"; 57 percent reported that such assistance was provided "rarely"; and the remaining 1 percent reported that their schools or school districts "never" provided any help in identifying or locating extramural support for their ideas.

Survey respondents reported a variety of obstacles or impediments which prevented them from engaging in grant development activities. Seventy-nine percent reported that a lack of knowledge of funding sources served either "very much" or "much" as an obstacle. Following closely behind, 76 percent of respondents reported that the lack of training in grant seeking and grant writing served "very much" or "much" as an obstacle. Heavy teaching load was cited by 72 percent as "very much" or "much" of an obstacle, as was lack of knowledge of budgeting (58 percent). Fifty-two percent of the respondents reported that a lack of administrative encouragement and a lack of sufficient advance warning about a grant opportunity served "very much" or "much" as obstacles. Thirty-seven percent and 33 percent respectively of the respondents reported that district bureaucratic requirements or sponsor rules and regulations served "very much" or "much" as obstacles to their grant related activities. Fewer than one-third of the respondents reported that the following served "very much" or "much" as obstacles: administrative assignments, i.e., department chair or union representative (32 percent), too much work or bother (30 percent), and no colleagues with whom to work (27 percent). As a result of these obstacles or impediments, fewer than 6 percent of the respondents reported that they "very often" or "often" were usually able to find the time to write proposals in which they had an interest.

Very few respondents reported that their schools or school districts provided any kind of technical assistance to help them to engage in grant development activity. Only 5 percent reported that they were "very often" or "often" provided with technical assistance in preparing budgets; only 3 percent were "very

often" provided with technical assistance in getting the necessary administrative approvals for their proposals. Fewer than 3 percent of the respondents reported that they were provided with technical assistance in looking for grant opportunities, writing grant proposals, or dealing with the district business office. None of the respondents reported that they "very often" or "often" received technical assistance in dealing with prospective sponsors. It is apparent, however, that teachers felt that technical assistance was important. Over 70 percent of the respondents felt that technical assistance in getting the necessary administrative approvals, learning how to look for grant opportunities, and learning how to write competitive proposals were either "very important" or "important". Similarly, nearly two-thirds of the respondents felt that technical assistance in preparing accurate and adequate budgets, dealing with prospective sponsors, and dealing with the district business office were either "very important" or "important".

Survey respondents reported a variety of incentives that were provided by their schools or school districts for engaging in grant development activities. The most frequently reported response was recognition in school or school district publications or assemblies (22 percent reported "very often" or "often"). "Other forms of public recognition" was cited as having been provided "very often" or "often" by 14 percent of the respondents. Fewer than 10 percent of the respondents reported that any type of reduced teaching load or extra administrative or personnel support was provided "very often" or "often" for engaging in grant related activities. Only 2 percent of the respondents reported that their grant related activity was "very often" or "often" a consideration in the tenure decision process.

When asked to indicate those factors which were important in motivating faculty to engage in grant development activities, the overwhelming majority (91 percent) reported that making a contribution to student learning was "very important" or "important". Eighty-four percent reported that having the ability to further support promising ideas and having the resources to acquire badly-needed equipment with grant funds were "very important" or "important". Seventy-eight percent of the respondents reported that

administrative support (i.e., extra school district funds for travel and equipment) was either "very important" or "important", and 77 percent reported that the satisfaction of obtaining a grant was "very important" or "important". Reduced teaching load to work on a successful grant was reported as "very important" or "important" by 75 percent of the respondents. Personnel support (i.e., extra secretarial help) and reduced teaching load to prepare a proposal were reported as "very important" or "important" by 70 percent and 66 percent respectively of the respondents. Building a personal professional reputation as a capable researcher was cited by two-thirds (66 percent) of the respondents as "very important" or "important". Other factors that were cited as "very important" or "important" were personal financial compensation (58 percent), gaining recognition for the school or school district (53 percent), recognition in school or school district publications or assemblies (41 percent), other forms of public recognition (35 percent) and consideration in the tenure decision process (30 percent).

Significant differences were observed among teachers who responded to the survey according to some of the classifying variables. Those teachers who indicated that they "very frequently" or "frequently" engaged in grant related activity reported that lack of training in grant seeking and grant writing ($t=4.57, p=.0001$), lack of knowledge of funding opportunities ($t=3.13, p=.002$), lack of knowledge of budgeting ($t=2.91, p=.005$), and lack of encouragement from the school district administration ($t=2.40, p=.018$) served as significantly greater obstacles to their grant development activities than teachers who reported that they engaged in grant related activities only "sometimes", "rarely" or "never". Similarly, those teachers who engaged in grant related activity more frequently than their less active colleagues reported that they received significantly more technical assistance in how to write competitive proposals ($t=2.20, p=.031$), how to obtain school district administrative approvals for their proposals ($t=2.19, p=.031$), and how to deal with the school district's business office ($t=2.18, p=.032$). It is important to note, however, that both groups of teachers reported that such technical assistance was provided, at best, infrequently. Additionally, teachers who reported that they engaged in grant related activity more frequently than their

less active colleagues also reported that the satisfaction of obtaining a grant award (t=2.10,p=.038), building their reputations as capable researchers (t=2.64,p=.012) and consideration of their grants activities in the tenure decision process (t=2.71,p=.008) were significantly more important to them as incentives to engage in grant related activity. Finally, a significantly greater percentage of male than female teachers felt that their grant related activity should be "very" important in the tenure decision process (t=2.77,p=.007).

While other statistically significant differences were observed among the respondents on some of the classifying variables such as functioning grants offices in the districts, gender, primary teaching assignments, length of service and tenure status, these differences were, in nearly all cases, moot because both groups reported that the factors for which the differences were observed were either "sometimes", "rarely" or "never" provided.

Discussion

As suggested above, most K-12 teachers view their primary roles as teachers and not as researchers or scholars. This perspective, in all probability, is supported (consciously or unconsciously) by district administrations and boards of education. Consequently, it is not unexpected to find that very few teachers actively engage in grant development activities. Similarly, very few school districts are reported to have frequently provided their teachers with assistance in locating sources of external funding for their ideas.

It is also not unexpected to find that school districts do not provide reduced teaching loads, extra secretarial help, or extra funds for travel or equipment to encourage teachers to engage in grant related activities. This is due largely to the fact that these items tend to require outlays of cash. Recognition in school publications, assemblies, and other media is less costly and much easier to provide. What is interesting, however, is the perception by teachers that their grants activity is generally not important in the tenure decision process. This suggests that many teachers view the tenure decision as primarily a

matter of quality of teaching, at best, or a matter of simple longevity, at worst.

The lack of a relationship between grant related activity and tenure is further supported by findings concerning the importance that teachers place on certain incentives for engaging in grant related activities. Teachers place great importance on grants as a contribution to student learning. They further view grants as an opportunity to support new and innovative ideas and a way to provide badly-needed equipment. Fewer than one-third of the respondents reported that *consideration in the tenure decision* was an important incentive. This suggests that teachers view their grant development activities more as a means to improve and enhance the services they provide to their students and less as a means to professional development or personal fulfillment or gain.

Teachers reported that a general lack of knowledge of grantsmanship, their teaching responsibilities, and a lack of administrative encouragement were the primary obstacles to their involvement in grant development activities. This is consistent with other survey findings which suggest that teachers are not provided with opportunities to increase their knowledge of potential funding sources or how to obtain grants. This is due largely to the belief that both they and their administrations view their primary responsibilities as teachers and not as researchers.

There is, however, reason to believe that more teachers would engage in grant development activities if they had more knowledge of the process. The survey findings suggest that teachers do not frequently receive technical assistance in the different aspects of grantsmanship. Nevertheless, the findings also suggest that they believe such technical assistance is important. More than two-thirds of the respondents reported that the procedural elements of grantsmanship ("how to" find grants, write proposals, get approvals, etc.) were either "very important" or "somewhat important".

The statistically significant differences that were observed between teachers who do and do not regularly engage in grant related activity were neither unusual nor unexpected. Teachers who "very frequently" or "frequently" engaged in grant seeking and grant writing were likely to possess more

knowledge than those who engaged in such activity only "sometimes", "rarely" or "never". Consequently, it was not unexpected to find that less active faculty reported that lack of knowledge about grants served more as an obstacle to their participation in grant related activities than their more active colleagues. In addition, teachers who were more active in grants generally seek and receive technical assistance in a variety of areas more frequently than their less active colleagues.

Finally, while other statistically significant differences may have been observed, their practical experience is questionable. Tests of significance were run to determine if systematic differences could be observed among the teacher respondents according to the classifying variables. The findings showed that most teachers reported their districts generally provided them with little help in locating sources of external funding for their ideas and little in the way of motivation to engage in grant related activities. Furthermore, most teachers reported that they do not engage frequently in grant seeking or grant writing. Since most teachers responded in a primarily negative manner, any difference that might be observed on a classifying variable may be statistically significant, but not practically significant. In other words, when the data were analyzed using a classifying variable such as gender, tenure status, or length of service, the comparison groups (e.g., male vs. female or tenured vs. non-tenured) showed statistically significant differences. However, both groups reported that they had received help in locating external sources of funding only "sometimes", "rarely" or "never". Therefore, although statistically significant differences were observed, the differences have no practical significance.

Implications

It is clear from this research that K-12 teachers do not view grant development activity as an essential part of their personal professional growth. They regard themselves primarily as teachers, and they regard grants primarily as a way to improve or facilitate their contribution to student learning. Moreover, school district administrators and boards of education do little to dissuade teachers from their perceptions about their roles and the role of grants. Except in limited ways or in specific instances, they tend to

provide neither incentives, rewards, nor technical assistance to encourage teachers to become more active in grant development. Furthermore, they do little to communicate to teachers that grant activity may be an important factor in the tenure decision.

Nevertheless, teachers can develop themselves in significant ways through the grant development process, and school district leaders may be well advised to encourage teachers to become more involved in grant seeking. Teachers should consider themselves as scholars, not unlike college and university professors. They should be encouraged to read the scholarly journals on a regular basis. Moreover, they should be encouraged to engage in different forms of scholarly research that will help them to improve their teaching skills. Grants are an excellent way to accomplish this. Teachers are already aware of the importance that grants can play in acquiring new or badly-needed equipment or in installing a new or innovative program in the schools. They should be encouraged to use grants as a way of fostering academic research in connection with such programs or equipment.

Here are some recommendations for helping teachers to become more involved in grant development activity:

1. School districts that do not have a grants or sponsored research office should organize one. A grants coordinator should be hired whose primary responsibility should be to work closely with the district's teachers in helping to stimulate grant activity. The cost of developing such a resource is minimal in relation to the increase in teacher morale and productivity, not to mention the offsetting revenue that is likely to be attracted to the district by the grants.

2. Boards of education and school district administrators should communicate to teachers that grants and other forms of scholarly activity are valued. Teachers should be encouraged to think of themselves as scholars, and school districts should provide incentives and reduce obstacles to scholarly activity.

3. Grant development specialists should be trained in every school. These individuals can in turn

help to train their teaching colleagues in grant seeking and grant writing. Collaborative research on such things as curriculum, teaching strategies, classroom management, and school climate should be encouraged and rewarded.

4. Grant development should be highlighted among the professional development plans of teachers. Both the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of successful grants acquisition can go a long way in improving teachers' skills and motivation.

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